

Outbreaks of contagious ecthyma in camels (*Camelus dromedarius*) in the Turkana district of Kenya

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Abstract

Mortality among camel calves (*Camelus dromedarius*) is one of the most serious problems faced by camel herdsman and, although there are several reasons for this mortality, diseases play a major role. In an investigation of outbreaks of contagious ecthyma in camels in the Turkana district of Kenya, four outbreaks were detected involving only camel calves. The principal lesions were distinct or largely coalesced pustules on the mouth, nose and muzzle. Direct electron microscopy of infected scabs was used to confirm the presence of the virus. Secondary infection of the pustules was common in affected calves. Morbidity in affected herds was 100%, with no adult involvement. Affected calves were unable to suckle properly. In all outbreaks, there was a concurrent outbreak of contagious pustular dermatitis in goat kids in the same household. Contagious ecthyma is an important disease in camels, contributing to calf debility and eventually to high calf mortality.